THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI BHUVNESH CHATURVEDI): (a) Yes, Sir. In view of the fact that a good percentage of the Country's Uranium reserves occur in Jaduguda, Narwapahar and other parts of Singhbhum District in Bihar and the adjoining areas of Orissa and major investigations are concentrated in this area and also the fact that suitable land/office accommodation is not available in Calcutta at reasonable prices, the Eastern Region Office of the Atomic Minerals Division (AMD) of the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) has been shifted from Calcutta to Khasmahal (near Jamshedpur) where laboratories, an office and Housing Complex of the AMD are nearing completion at a cost of about Rs. 7 crore. The land for the purpose was aquired in 1971 and the approvals for construction of the complex at Khasmahal were given in 1989 and 1990. It will serve to consolidate the various offices of the AMD spread over Ranchi & Koderma in Bihar and Calcutta. However, a Liaison Office of the AMD will continue to function at Calcutta with the necessary staff.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Yes, Sir. During 1978 it was contemplated to construct a building at Calcutta for the office and Laboratories of AMD, Eastern Region. But since there was no suitable land available, the project could not make any headway.

Discussions were held with the Variable Energy Cyclotron Centre (VECC) at Calcutta for allotting a plot of land in their compound at Calcutta for building AMD Offices and Laboratories. But this did not materialise. The cost of the land offered by the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA), Government of West Bengal, was too high. Secondly, AMD was already in possession of 20 acres of land at Khasmahal in the neighbourhood of which the sites for major investigations of the Eastern Region are located.

(d) Exploration of Uranium is a Research and Development activity of a specialised nature Interaction with different science and research organisations at Calcutta will continue through the Liaison Office to be maintained at Calcutta. The location of the offices at Khasmahal will augment interaction with officials of the Uranium Corporation of India Limited (UCIL) based at Jaduguda, Bihar, in the field of exploration.

Radiation Menace around UCIL

1481. SHRI VIREN J. SHAH:
SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether about 70,000 people in an area of about 10 Kms. around the Uranium Corporation of India Limited (UCIL) at Jaduguda in Singhbhum District have fallen prey to ailments due to radiation effects from the 'waste ponds';

(b) whether the water and soil around the waste ponds have highly been contaminated affecting the human beings and animals alike; and

(c) if so, what remedial steps have been taken or are proposed to be taken to disinfect the water and soil around UCIL to save the residents of the areas of the ill-effects of radiation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI BHUVNESH CHATURVEDI): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) The ground water and soil in the area around the waste

ponds at Jaduguda are not contaminated due to the operation of Uranium mine and mill of Uranium Corporation of India Ltd. at Jaduguda. The waste produced in the operation of the mine and mill is well contained and the effluent is recycled and re-treated in the effluent treatment plant before any discharge. There is no spread of radioactivity into the environment UCIL monitors any effect of radioactivity on the employees and its effect in the area around the Uranium mine and mill at Jaduguda. An Environmental Survey laboratory of Health Physics Unit of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre is functioning in Jaduguda since the inception of the company. Scientists of this laboratory collect various samples of soil/water on a continuous basis and measure the radioactivity level. They also continuously measure natural background radiation level at different locations over a radius of around 35 Km. taking Jaduguda as a centre. In all 30 locations are covered. All the data indicate that the radiation level at Jaduguda is in the same range as at the other locations around this area.

AERB report on Kaiga Nuclear plant Accident

1482. SHRI G. Y. KRISHNAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have since received the report of the Atomic energy Regulatory Board (AERB) on investigations into the collapse of a concrete dome at the Kaiga Atomic Power Plant in May last year;

(b) if so, what are its findings and Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) the remedial measures being taken to countenance such situation arising in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI BHUVNESH CHATURVEDI): (a) The final report of the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board on investigation into the incident of delamination of a portion of inner containment dome at the Kaiga Atomic Power Project in May, 1994 is yet to be received.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd. has taken up re-engineering and rehabilitation of the dome taking into consideration all probable factors. The recommendations of the investigating Committees will be taken into account before finalising the reconstruction of the Kaiga-1 dome and also in subsequent units.

Food irradiation technology

1483. SHRI G. Y. KRISHNAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has embarked on an abmitious programme to promote food irradiation technology on a large scale;

(b) if so, broad features of this programme and the food products which it will cover; and

(c) in what manner it is proposed to commercialise this technology within the country and for export purposes?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI BHUVNESH CHATURVEDI): (a) The Department of Atomic Energy is cooperating with industries in the commercial exploitation of food irradiation technology which is available with the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), a constituent unit of the Department of Atomic Energy.

(b) The Prevention of Food Adulteration Rules, 1955, framed under the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954, have been amended to permit sale of irradiated onions, potatoes and spices